

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as amended is respectfully requested.

A new Abstract has been provided, as required, and a correction has been made on page 25 of the specification to overcome the objection to the disclosure.

To advance the prosecution, Claims 1 and 3 have been cancelled and Claims 2 and 4 have been amended to clarify the manner in which these claims distinguish patentably from the prior art relied upon in the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

Claim 2 now recites, *inter alia*, that a width of a portion of the steering column along a line crossing the center of the steering column is larger than the width of an expanded portion where a shaft is inserted. See, e.g., without limitation, Fig. 4B in which S4 is greater than S3.

Claim 4 now recites, *inter alia*, that a width of the steering column along a line crossing the center of the steering column is larger than the width of a first expanded portion where a shaft is inserted and the width of a second expanded portion. See, e.g., without limitation, Fig. 5B, in which S4 is greater than S3. See also Fig. 10B, wherein W is greater than X and greater than Y.

JP 10-7003, the principal reference relied upon in the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), does not teach or suggest the inventions recited in amended Claims 2 and 4, and the deficiencies of this reference are not cured by the secondary reference, Kurita.

The teaching of Kurita in Fig. 5 (referred to near the bottom of page 5 of the Office Action) is not with regard to the dimensional relationship between an expanded portion of a steering column along a line crossing the center of the steering column and an expanded portion where a shaft (of an adjustment mechanism) is inserted.

Furthermore, in Kurita a steering column 2' and a distance bracket 12 are separate parts that are connected together, so a shaft 8 of an adjustment mechanism can only be disposed away from an outer periphery of the steering column. In the present invention, since the steering column is expanded, there is no such limitation, and the shaft of the adjustment mechanism can be disposed closer to the axis of the steering column, so that the fastening force can be improved.

When a steering column is expanded, the expanded portion becomes thinner (smaller in wall thickness) and is easily deflected when clamped by flat plate portions of a vehicle body side bracket, so sufficient holding force

cannot be obtained. By virtue of the invention of Claims 2 and 4, clamping pressure can be exerted at locations closer to the column axis, thereby avoiding the reduction of clamping force.

Accordingly, Claims 2 and 4 distinguish patentably from the references and should be allowed.

This application is now believed to be in condition for allowance.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge to Deposit Account No. 50-1165 (XA-10291) any fees under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 and 1.17 that may be required by this paper and to credit any overpayment to that Account. If any extension of time is required in connection with the filing of this paper and has not been separately requested, such extension is hereby requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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